

King.—I open the doors of this dark room to-day—the game is finished here ! Come, come with me now, come outside—*into the light !*

Sudarshana.—Before I go, let me bow at the feet of my lord of darkness, my cruel, my terrible, my peerless one !”

Thus ends this wonderful drama of the soul. Though it is not a play in the usual sense of the word, it is peerless in its beauty and its spiritual suggestiveness. We know what spiritual beauty and truth lies in the *Prabodhachandrodaya*—the play where in noble and musical Sanscrit the life of the soul is depicted in allegory. The drama by Tagore is even more entrancingly beautiful and suggestive. It will require volumes to disclose its beauty and spiritual meaning. Let us close the book with reverent hands and pray to the Lord to lead us “into the light.”

THE ECHOES OF THE TEACHINGS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

BY

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IV

(An Evening-talk on Sivaji).

It was a beautiful moonlit night and Swamiji was sitting in the verandah of the bungalow of the late Mr. Bhattacharjee on the South Beach of Madras (already referred to), conversing in Hindi with Mr. Munshi Jagamohanlal, the private secretary of the Maharajah of Khetri. This gentleman had been sent by the Maharajah to trace out the whereabouts of the Swamiji and to fetch him back to Khetri to bless the newly born son and heir to the State. When Swamiji was at Khetri about a year previously, the Maharajah of Khetri had begged of him to confer the boon of a son and Swamiji while he was in one of his higher moods had actually blessed him saying that God had granted his prayer. So the Maharajah wanted Swamiji back in his palace at any cost and could not remain contented until he saw him. When I went over there after my office work I prostrated before Swamiji and took my seat ; and suddenly Swamiji began to sing a Hindi song in praise

of Sivaji in his own masterly way, the last two lines of which were :—

दावा द्रुमदंड पर चित्ता मृग झुंड पर,
भूषण बितंड पर जैसे मृगराज हैं ;
तेज तम अंशपर काह्न जिम कंसपर,
त्यों मिलेच्छ वसं पर शर शिवराज हैं ॥

(As forest-fire is to the forest trees, a leopard to the deer-herds and a lion to the stately elephants ; as the sun is to the darkness of the night, as Krishna was to Kansa, so was king Sivaji, a lion, towards the hordes of Mlechchas.)

It was a long song as I learnt it afterwards ; but I who had learnt in my school days that Sivaji was a cunning unprincipled freebooter, “an upstart robber,” a marauder and a treacherous murderer, suddenly interrupted Swamiji and asked him how that praise and those lines were justified in the case of Sivaji. Was he not a mere child of fortune, a marauder who collected similar men like himself and succeeded in establishing a kingdom by sheer cunning and treachery ? Swamiji immediately gave up his singing and saw me full in the face, his face being lit up with the fire of indignation and said, “Shame on you, Doctor. You are a Maharatta and still that is all you know of the greatest king that India had produced within the last three hundred years ; one who was the very incarnation of Siva, about whom prophecies were given out long before he was born ; and his advent was eagerly expected by all the great souls and saints of Maharashtra as the deliverer of the Hindus from the hands of the Mlechchas and one who succeeded in the establishment of the Dharma which had been trampled under foot by the depredations of the devastating hordes of the Moghals. This is what comes of your reading Indian History written by foreigners who could have no sympathy with you, nor could they have any respect for your culture, traditions, manners and customs which they could not understand. Is there a greater hero, a greater saint, a greater bhakta and a greater king than Sivaji ? Sivaji was the very embodiment of a born ruler of men as typified in your great Epics. He was the type of the real son of India representing the true consciousness of the nation. It was he who showed what the future of India is going to be sooner or later, a group of independent units under one umbrella as it were, *i.e.*, under one supreme imperial suzerainty.” I was simply thunderstruck and seemed to myself so small, so foolish and so ignorant ; still the spirit of enquiry in me

could not be put down even by those eloquent and fiery words of indignation which Swamiji gave expression to, for I thought whatever might be said of Sivaji there could be no explanation for his treacherous conduct towards Afzul Khan, the great Pathan commander sent from the court of Bijapur, whom he is said to have killed under circumstances which any one who has a spark of morality in him could not but abhor. Still with some amount of hesitation but with a mischievous curiosity to find out how Swamiji could condone this treacherous deed of Sivaji, I begged of him to tell us something about the real life-history of Sivaji and what he thought of his one act which had been considered the greatest blot in his life and on account of which his character had been painted so black.

Then Swamiji began to give a brief account of the life of Sivaji, with great feeling and enthusiasm and we listened to the same with great eagerness and rapt attention; for so engrossing and interesting it was to listen to those soul-stirring words of Swamiji who spoke at the time with so great an earnestness and yet with so much pity and kindness. It was a pity there was no one to take down all that he spoke that evening in shorthand, nor did I make any notes at the time either, for my mind was so absorbed in following his narrative that the idea of taking down any notes never entered my brain. Yet the indelible impressions he made on even our callous hearts that memorable evening do still persist though somewhat dimmed, and the following is but an imperfect reproduction of those impressions.

“Doctor,” began Swamiji, “it is a pity that in our schools, History of India written by foreigners alone is taught to our boys. The foreign writers of the Mahratta History can never shake off their bias nor understand the real character and greatness and the inner motive of the actions of Sivaji. We cannot blame them for their beliefs which more or less depended on the writings of the Mussalman chroniclers who out of spite and hatred, denounced Sivaji as a *Jalim* or freebooter. On the other hand there are many Mahratta *bakhars* or chroniclers who have written about him but who, true to their ancient puranic ideal, looked upon Sivaji as an incarnation of God born to relieve His devotees from the oppressions of Mahomedan fanaticism and to re-establish the Dharma. Naturally the foreign writers leaned on the side of the Mussalman chroniclers and considered the account given by the Mahrattas as mere superstition. But fortunately there are many

independent Persian manuscripts dealing with the history of Aurangzeeb, Sivaji and the Bijapur kings. They corroborate the account of the Mahratta chroniclers so far as facts are concerned, though they do not share in their belief of the superhuman nature of the exploits of Sivaji. And if young men who have any patriotic feeling towards the history of their motherland were to make researches in finding out and translating these manuscripts much truer light may be thrown on the greatness of the doings of Sivaji and of many others who helped in the formation of the great Mahratta Confederacy and it will be a valuable addition to our knowledge of the real History of India."

"But before proceeding to narrate some of the main incidents from Sivaji's life", said Swamiji "let us see what was the state of India just before the birth of Sivaji. The rise of Maharatta power in India was one of those sudden and surprising revolutions which, amid the troubled currents of political events, have been so frequently seen to spring from the reaction of despotism. The Moghal Empire under the absolute direction of Aurangzeeb extended over nearly the whole of India. Aurangzeeb was a tyrant who ruled ably though despotically. The Maharattas were a hardy and active race who inhabited the extensive plains of the Deccan surrounded by those elevated chains of mountains called the Ghats which formed a natural and almost impregnable barrier against the inroads of any invading army. Nearly three centuries of Mahomedan invasion which preceded the birth of Sivaji had left lasting memories of great horrors and oppressions by Mahomedans, and the threatened invasion of the Deccan by the troops of the tyrant Aurangzeeb gave rise in the minds of many, to all sorts of apprehensions of the renewal of fanatical intolerance and cruelty which the Mahomedan conquerors were prone to exhibit in their dealings with the people of the country. There was already ruin of all virtue and religion and the noblest in the land had been made to suffer. Hence a universal prayer seemed to have gone from the heart of these people to the great God of Mercy for the birth of a deliverer. The time also seemed ripe for the birth of such a person and ample opportunities were afforded to a leader of daring and comprehensive mind to assemble the Maharattas who formed now the disunited members of a vast and dislocated empire, and to establish them into an independent community, upon the wreck of that power by which they had been subdued. Such a leader was Sivaji, the founder of the Maharatta dynasty, which finally became the most flourishing in Hindustan."

There were many prophecies in the Deccan about the birth of a Deliverer from the oppressions of the Moghals. It looks as if this very oppression gave rise to a growth of religious spirit amongst the people which was such a peculiar feature of the times. Quite a galaxy of god-intoxicated, and self-realised men were going about the country preaching the people that the upholding of the Dharma was the be-all and the end-all of life. Samarthā Rama Das, Thukaram, Ekanath and a host of others were all more or less contemporaries of Sivaji.

"There is one prophecy" said Swamiji, "that comes to my mind and that is that of the Hermit of Matheran given as a piece of advice to his pupil Nattaji Palkar. This Hermit of Matheran was once a great soldier, a pious man who had renounced the world and devoted the last days of his life, entirely to Yogic practices and meditation of God. He was a past-master in the arts of not only military warfare, but also in the use of the sword, spear and the bow. And this Nattaji Palkar plays a very important part in the exploits of Sivaji as his right hand in leading the command of his selected troops of Mowlies. When Nattaji Palkar after serving his apprenticeship under the great saint learnt from him the art of throwing spear, archery and sword-play he was directed by the Hermit to leave him and go abroad to serve his motherland. The following advice is said to have been given to him by the Hermit. "My son, see that thou usest aright the knowledge and power that thou hast gained. Never draw thy sword except to defend the oppressed and in the cause of thy religion and thy countrymen. Amongst the signs of approaching death are the clear visions of the future that pour in upon my soul, the great God Siva has again and again appeared to me and revealed to me that he has taken the form of a man to free Maharashtra. Would that it were vouchsafed to me to fight by his side in the glorious struggle! It may not be; but it is something that I can send him as his servant thee, the son of my heart.

"Often I see the incarnate God leading his warriors against the bearded hosts of Islam, and ever I see thee at his right hand in the day of victory and the hour of danger. For he is not always victorious and triumphant. No, he is like yonder stately anjan-tree, that bends ever and anon before the might of tempest, but is never broken or uprooted. Sometimes he is a fugitive and sometimes I see him bending low to the lordly foe. But he ever rises again, and the seeming suppliant plunges his deadly sword into the heart

of the enemy, who is deluded into thinking him conquered. O ! for one hour of the joy of battle by his side, when he turns like a tiger on his pursuers and drives them to perdition !

“ Oh, my son, treasure my visions in thy heart, for perchance this may be the last time that fate allows me to address thee. Thou wilt stand by the side of the great saviour of his people, when at last triumphant over all his enemies, he takes his seat on his golden throne under the silken umbrella, the symbol of his regal power, as an Emperor of Maharashtra. I see in my mind's eye the Brahmins and ministers sprinkling over his head the waters brought from the most sacred rivers and fountains of India, and the golden lotus flowers set with precious jewels distributed among the immense concourse assembled on the airy mountain of Rairi to greet him on the great day that consummates his work on earth. Even farther into the misty future my vision bears me, to the time when the incarnate God returns to his heavenly home. His work remains firmly built by his wisdom and might. His successors lead their followers far beyond the bounds of Maharashtra, till they sit as conquerors in the palaces of Dehli and Agra, and water their steeds in the sacred stream of the Ganges.

“ And now my son, go apart and ponder over all my words, while I pray for thee and for our country, and beseech the great Gods to hasten the time of deliverance.*

“ There are many such accounts current amongst the traditions of the Maharatta people but it only shows that there was a strong under-current of desire in the minds of the people for the appearance of a deliverer from the oppression of the Mahomedans and how that took shape in the minds of the pure and holy saints in the form of visions and prophecies so common before the birth of great souls in any country or in any age.

Sivaji was born in the fort of Shivneri in the year 1627 A.D. His mother Jija Bai had been forsaken on the road by her husband Shaji when he fled to Bijapur pursued by his own father-in-law on account of some enmity that cropped up between him and his father-in-law at the time. She was then in a delicate state of health and her father who was pursuing Shaji met her and sent her to that fort and provided for her comforts. Jija Bai on reaching Shivneri devoted most of her time to the worship of the Goddess

* Some of the incidents mentioned by Swamiji I found in my later studies, described by Prof. Macmillan in his historical romance called “ In the Wild Mahratta War,” and by Colonel Meadows Taylor in his “ Tara.” These incidents I have reproduced in the words of these authors.

Bhavani who flourished there under the name of *Shive* and was believed by all the people there as a powerful Goddess who granted the true prayers of her devotees. This pure-hearted and devoutly pious lady prayed to Bhavani saying that if she bore a son who should be after her heart she would name him after her august self ; and after some days she gave birth to our hero and named him Sivaji.

There were many influences which contributed to make Sivaji great, the earliest and the most important being the influence of his divinely noble mother Jija Bai. She was the daughter of the proudest Maharatta jagirdar of the time. The women of India especially those of the higher classes and families are invariably the treasuries of family events and deeds of departed or existing greatness. Jija Bai who was fired with an amount of ambition unheard of before, strove hard to excite her husband Shaji to exertion in the cause of the Hindus and the Hindu Religion and she sought out the histories of his family, filled his minds with the legends of their power and urged him to assert his rights to regular sovereignty of districts in which he was then only an official head. She actively canvassed all the heads of the Maharatta families with a view to combine resistance against the Mahomedan powers, then beginning to show symptoms of a final decadence. But with no effect, as Shaji the servant and vassal of the Emperor of Delhi as the king of Bijapur, though a bold and enterprising partisan soldier, was restless and of a vacillating disposition and lacked the higher qualities which could direct and take advantage of such movements. He was unable to understand the spirit of this great woman, so he married another wife and lived with her in his jagir in the Karnatic for a number of years. But nothing checked his wife's ambition. Jija Bai abandoned both by her father and her husband, had good reasons to feel in her own person the indignity of foreign subjection. In her desolate condition young Sivaji was all in all for her and she brought him up relying solely on the protection of the Gods, especially Goddess Bhavani, who had spared her and her child in the midst of such afflictions. The hill forts which surrounded their place of residence were associated in Sivaji's memories as his only safe home, and no wonder with such a mother and associations, he developed a character of hardihood and enterprise from his early days. The boy loved his mother with affection which had no bounds. His father never lived with him but his mother was always at hand. Throughout his life she was the guiding genius and protecting deity whose approbation rewarded all toil and filled him with a courage which nothing could daunt. The

religious turn of mind and the strong faith of his mission, so prominent in his character, Sivaji owed entirely to his mother, who literally fed him on the old puranic legends of bravery and war. In all the great crisis of his life he first invoked her blessings and she always charged him to attempt the most hazardous feats trusting in Divine protection. His mother, an ardent votary of the Goddess Bhavani was occasionally visited by the Goddess in vision and being filled with divine afflatus spoke prophecy. Sivaji believed in her inspiration. It was a habit of Sivaji to go to no ceremony, nor return from any, without saluting his mother. Did he ever leave the house or return to it, he touched her feet reverently, while she gave her blessing. The son's faith in his mother was only equalled by her faith in and love for him ; and as a pattern of filial piety and devotion his example is still inculcated upon the Maharatta youth by many a village school master who has not come under the influence of the grant-in-aidcode. If ever great men owed their inspiration to their mothers the influence of Jija Bai was a factor of prime importance in the making of Sivaji's career and the chief source of his strength.

Says Meadows Taylor, "Left to herself with her young son amongst the native wilds surrounded by rude retainers, Jija Bai turned to Sivaji as soon as he could comprehend her plans ; and by the mother and son those designs were sketched out which, in respect of utter hopelessness at first and splendid success afterwards, have few comparisons in the world's history."

Next to Jija Bai's influence over young Sivaji, during the most impressionable period of his life, was the influence exerted by Dadoji Kondadev, the agent of Shaji, who stood in Shaji's place as guardian of his child, and administrator of his estates. By disposition he was cautious to a degree which made it difficult for him at times to sympathise with the wild freedom with which Sivaji loved to roam over the hills but his love for his charge was unstinted ; and at last he was persuaded that Sivaji was not to be judged by the ordinary standards of men and that the ideas over which the young man brooded were of a sort in which failure was glorious. Sivaji's wildness needed the curb and the guidance of a strict disciplinarian like Dadoji. He taught the young boy all the arts of peace and war which it was good for him to know and he taught him what was more valuable still, the way to organise and control undisciplined troops. Above all, Dadoji was a master-hand in the art of civil government, and Sivaji's revenue system and his government were entirely modelled upon the practice of his teacher but for whose guiding

hand, the success which attended Sivaji's rule would not have been so certain and permanent as it proved to be.

I do not mean, said Swamiji, to dwell on the military exploits nor on the excellence of the civil government of Sivaji. Those are matters of ordinary history but I only wish to narrate such instances of Sivaji's doing as will show in relief what a great soul he was. Thus under the combined influence of Jija Bai and Dadoji Kondadev the boy grew up and became an expert in all martial exercises and accomplishments. Even while he was young he was joined by many young men of his times in his enterprises against the Mahomedans, which to the people savoured of madness, but which, as they increased in boldness of design and execution, were believed by his companions to be the deeds of one especially protected by the Goddess Bhavani. These young men, undisciplined and unarmed as they were in their early days joined their leader Sivaji in scaling mountain forts, descending into the plains beyond the valleys gathering arms and booty, occupying Mahomedan garrisons, putting their defenders to death and never relinquishing what they had obtained. So year after year passed and young Sivaji as he grew stronger became more daring and enterprising. His companions sympathised with their young master's spirit of adventure and they and their kindred spirits proved of eminent service to him in his ambitious plans. There was such a charm about Sivaji's personality that even those who were his enemies and whom he had conquered on the battle field, became his trusted followers. Even the Mahomedans felt the influence that was at work. Sivaji's Chief Admiral Darya Sarung was a Mahomedan and fought with the Siddhi admirals of the Moghuls; and so was Ebrahim Khan, a Pathan leader, a Mahomedan. Sivaji by his great personality filled the rank and file of his followers with his own spirit and this was the mission of his life. The men whose powers and counsels helped Sivaji to found the kingdom were themselves endowed with a high sense of duty. Not one failed in doing his duty in time of danger, not one proved treacherous to his master or went over to the enemy while many died at their posts in the hour of victory consoled with the thought that they faithfully did the service assigned to them by their great and loving master.

All this was due to the fact that Sivaji's mind was cast in intensely religious mould and he continued to be above all, religious throughout his chequered career. Sivaji felt in him what religious enthusiasm alone can inspire, the feeling that he had a commission which required him to think little of his own interests

and advancement but to devote his whole life to the cause of his country and his people.

To give but a few instances of the religious aspects of the life of Sivaji, said Swamiji, in the first place one must know that Sivaji was not a man of letters. He despised reading and writing but he was intensely fond of hearing the old epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharatta, and trying to imitate the heroes in the deeds of valour. A fascination for sacred plays or *Kathas* as they were termed which had possessed him from childhood, was a strange peculiarity of his character. As he grew up, no distance, no personal danger, deterred him from being present at any Katha which could by any possibility be reached. He would walk many miles to attend a "Katha" or recital of them by specially noted God-intoxicated, highly evolved spiritual teachers. Sometimes openly and more frequently in a peasant's or soldier's garb the young prince with a few chosen associates would appear at places where his arrival was incomprehensible and his disappearance equally abrupt and mysterious. In the latter days, these *Kathas* became the means of assembling his men without attracting suspicion; but his adherents well knew that the most exciting enterprises immediately followed them.

One instance of Sivaji endangering his person on account of his great passion for hearing *Kathas* from Godly persons and the miraculous escape he had, I should like to state, said Swamiji.

(To be continued.)

EDUCATION.

"Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man"—thus in a short pithy sentence the Swami Vivekananda has shown the ideal of education. Man is potentially perfect, and he is struggling ever to give full manifestation to that latent perfection. His life is a long history of that struggle.

In the seed lie hidden all the possibilities of a full-grown tree, and it is trying hard to give full expression to them; but their expression is determined by the action and reaction of two conflicting forces: one is trying for its manifestations and the other is thwarting it. For convenience's sake let us call the favourable force as internal and the unfavourable one as external. And the manifestation of the tree in any form depends exactly upon the adjustment of